

Nomination of Ross Swimmer to be Special Trustee -
American Indians at U.S. Department of Interior

Wednesday February 12, 2003

Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me here today to introduce Ross Swimmer.

I have known Ross for more than 22 years. He has decades of experience in Indian law, banking, finance, and has served in many leadership capacities. I do not know anyone more qualified than Ross for the position of Special Trustee at the U.S. Department of Interior.

Ross is currently serving as the Director of the Office of Indian Trust Transition for the Department of the Interior where he is responsible for the management of the Indian trust fund.

For 10 years, Ross served as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation - the second largest Indian tribe in the United States. Under his leadership the tribe saw improvements in health care, housing, economic development and education. Ross implemented the concept of self-help for rural development, which became a model for other Indian tribes and rural areas throughout the United States.

After serving three terms as Cherokee Chief, Ross became Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of the Interior, where he was responsible for a \$1.5 billion dollar budget, 15,000 employees, and the oversight and management of policy concerning Indian Affairs.

Ross has extensive banking and finance experience. Early in his career, Ross was President of the First National Bank in Tahlequah, OK. Later he served as President and CEO of Cherokee Nation Industries, a multi-million dollar manufacturing company in the defense, aerospace and telecommunications industry. He also was Chairman of the First State Bank in Hulbert, OK, which was at the time, one of only two Indian-owned banks in the United States.

Ross's legal experience includes Associate and Partner in the firm of Hanson, Fisher, Tumilty, Peterson and Tompkins in Oklahoma City and General Counsel for the Cherokee Nation. Ross joined the law firm of Hall, Estill, Hardwick, Gable, Golden and Nelson in which he established the Indian law division of the firm.

Because of Ross' outstanding service and leadership, he was given the Indian Health Service Leadership Award and the Department of Interior's Distinguished Service Award. He was named Outstanding American Indian Leader in 1985 and inducted into the Tulsa Historical Society's Hall of Fame. Ross has had the honor of serving as Chairman of the White House Conference on Indian Education; Chairman of the Energy Resources Tribes; and as Co-Chairman of the Presidential Commission on Reservation Economies.

Ross is well respected in the state of Oklahoma for his efforts and extensive knowledge concerning Indian Affairs. I know Ross looks forward to continuing his service in the capacity of Special Trustee for American Indians.

I look forward to the confirmation of Ross Swimmer.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.